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Reaction to route mixed in Laveen

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The Arizona Republic
Jul. 7, 2006 12:00 AM

News that parts of Laveen Village will become a 10-lane freeway in the next 10 years has elicited mixed reaction from residents there.

Supporters of the 55th Avenue route of the proposed South Mountain Freeway say that "everybody" in Laveen wants the freeway there. Critics argue just as vigorously that "nobody" in Laveen does.

But all agree that the South Mountain Freeway will forever change the southwest community.

The Arizona Department of Transportation announced last week that it will link the western end of the proposed South Mountain Freeway to Interstate 10 at 55th Avenue. The option was one of three final choices that included a less-favored route along 71st Avenue and a link at 99th Avenue, south of Loop 101.

In the months between a citizen advisory panel's April recommendation of the Loop 101 link and last week's announcement, the 55th Avenue alignment enjoyed heavy support from cities and landowners.

City councils in Phoenix and a half-dozen West Valley cities passed resolutions in favor of 55th Avenue, which was the original alignment when the freeway was first designed in the mid-1980s.

"I'm really disappointed that they went the political way rather than the logical way for traffic flow," said Cheryl Babcock of Laveen. "It's sad that they went with the plan they did 20 years ago, when 55th was a viable outer limit to the city of Phoenix. It's not now."

William Palmer said he's floating the idea of filing a class-action lawsuit against ADOT and Phoenix among his Laveen neighbors.

"The average Joe, his concerns have been put aside for the wants, the needs, the desires of developers," he said.

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